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ABSTRACT

In the coming age of technological advancement and global communications, it is increasingly important for education to destroy myths and stereotypes too long in existence, and for the United States to avoid a tendency toward cultural isolationism. Educators must encourage a spirit of understanding and cooperation, facilitated by the greater representation of students of various cultures in the classroom to share insights. The presence of the new immigrant in the American classroom is instructional for American-born children of all ethnic groups. Educators must persist in their efforts to keep children tolerant of each other despite communication problems and cultural differences. The cultural understanding and mutual respect gained from multilingual, multicultural, and global curriculum content and activities in all disciplines can help to prepare our children as global leaders. (MSE)

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MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ARE ESSENTIAL FOR EDUCATION AND THE INFORMATION AGE

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THE ELOQUENT AND WISE WORDS OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. PROVIDE US HERE TODAY WITH ONE OF THE MOST SALIENT REASONS FOR THE INFUSION OF MULTICULTURAL AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES IN EDUCATION. HE SAID:

> "ALL MEN ARE INTERDEPENDENT. EVERY NATION IS AN HEIR OF A VAST TREASURY OF IDEAS AND LABOR TO WHICH BOTH THE LIVING AND THE DEAD OF ALL NATIONS HAVE CONTRIBUTED. WHETHER WE REALIZE IT OR NOT, EACH OF US LIVES ETERNALLY 'IN THE RED.' WE ARE EVERLASTING DEBTORS TO KNOWN AND UNKNOWN MEN AND WOMEN. WHEN WE ARISE IN THE MORNING, WE GO INTO THE BATHROOM WHERE WE REACH FOR A SPONGE WHICH IS PROVIDED FOR US BY A PACIFIC ISLANDER. WE REACH FOR SOAP THAT IS CREATED FOR US BY A EUROPEAN. THEN AT THE TABLE WE DRINK COFFEE WHICH IS PROVIDED FOR US BY A SOUTH AMERICAN, OR TEA BY A CHINESE, OR COCOA BY A WEST AFRICAN. BEFORE WE LEAVE FOR OUR JOBS WE ARE ALREADY BEHOLDEN TO MORE THAN HALF THE WORLD."

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DR. KING MADE THIS STATEMENT OVER 20 YEARS AGO, BEFORE WE WERE FULLY AWARE OF THE EFFECTS OF THE FUSION OF COMPUTERS AND TELE-COMMUNICATIONS. HIS PROPHETIC TESTIMONY LENDS CREDENCE TO THE FACT THAT EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US HAS A DEBT TO EACH OTHER—IN A GLOBAL WAY. IN AN AMERICAN WAY, EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US HAS A DEBT TO OUR YOUNG PEOPLE; AS EDUCATORS, WE ARE OBLIGED TO PAY THAT DEBT WITH COMPOUNDING INTEREST TO EACH AND EVERY STUDENT.

AND I MEAN EACH AND EVERY ONE, REGARDLESS OF RACE, CREED, COLOR OR NATIONAL ORIGIN. BEFORE I LAUNCH INTO THE SUBJECT OF EQUITY IN EDUCATION, AS IT RELATES TO MULTICULTURALISM, I WOULD LIKE TO CITE A FEW GLOBAL TRENDS, AS DESCRIBED BY HARLAN CLEVELAND IN THE KNOWLEDGE EXECUTIVE, THAT WILL FURTHER ILLUMINATE JUST HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO KNOW THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE, IN ORDER THAT WE CAN EQUIP OUR STUDENTS TO NOT MERELY SURVIVE OR COPE WITH BUT, RATHER, TO EXCEL IN OUR INFORMATIZED, SHRINKING PLANET.

FIRST: "IN THE CHANGING INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT, CIVILIZATION WILL BE BUILT MORE AROUND COMMUNITIES OF **PEOPLE**, WHETHER OR NOT THEY HAPPEN ALSO TO FORM COMMUNITIES OF **PLACE**." (FUTURIST MAGDA McHALE) COMPUTERS, TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND RAPID TRANSIT ARE ENABLING PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD TO SHOP AT HARROD'S AT LONDON FOR AN ANNUAL SALE; TO VOTE FOR THEIR FAVORITE MOVIES; TO SATISFY THE SABBATH REQUIREMENT BY WATCHING THE POPE SAY MASS IN THE VATICAN; AND TO INTERVENE IN A VARIETY OF MARKETPLACES.

OUR CHILDREN ARE, NEEDLESS TO SAY, MORE COMFORTABLE WITH THIS TECHNOLOGY; BUT THEY WILL ALWAYS NEED US TO SHARE WITH THEM OUR EXPERTISE AT DECISION-MAKING, PRIORITIZING, AND OTHER SKILLS ONLY EXPERIENCE CAN TEACH. THUS, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE KEEP ABREAST OF WORLD DEVELOPMENTS AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES. OTHERWISE, THE SITUATION MAY BE LIKE THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND; OR RATHER, THE NEARSIGHTED LEADING THE FARSIGHTED.

WE CANNOT LET THEM SETTLE FOR SHORT-RANGE GOALS. WE MUST DESTROY MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES TOO MANY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN OPERATING AROUND.

SECOND: AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER, MOST NATIONS HAVE CONSIDERED THEMSELVES TO BE THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE AND FELT JUSTIFIED TO EMBRACE THE ISOLATIONIST THEORY. THE UNITED STATES CERTAINLY NOT TOO MANY YEARS AGO PRIDED ITSELF ON ITS REMOTENESS. SUCH ISOLATION IS NO LONGER REMOTELY REALISTIC; IN FACT, THE U.S. IS THE MOST GLOBALLY INVOLVED NATION ON THIS PLANET—AND NOT ONLY WITH ITS NEIGHBORS ON THE CONTINENT OF NORTH AMERICA.

NOR IS ITS INVOLVEMENT TIED DIRECTLY TO ITS MILITARY SUPERPOWER STATUS, AS IS THE SOVIET UNION. SCHOLAR AND EDUCATOR HARLAN CLEVELAND CONTRASTS VERY WELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE U.S.S.R.: "QUITE A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD ARE USING SOVIET WEAPONS. BUT HARDLY ANYONE OUTSIDE OF THE U.S.S.R. IS SINGING SOVIET SONGS, LISTENING TO SOVIET ROCK, DRINKING SOVIET COLAS, FLYING IN SOVIET AIRLINERS, HOARDING SOVIET RUBLES, BUYING SOVIET COMPUTERS AND ELECTRONICS, APING SOVIET AGRICULTURE, OR COPYING THE SOVIET POLITICAL SYSTEM."

CULTURAL ISOLATIONISM IS NOT SIMPLY REALISTIC OR PRACTICAL.

ANOTHER ASPECT TO THIS TRANSNATIONAL MARKETPLACE IS THAT THE PERCENTAGES OF FOREIGN MANUFACTURERS AND CONSUMERS WILL BE STEADILY INCREASING, AND OUR STUDENTS WILL NEED TO BE EVEN MORE FAMILIAR WITH CULTURAL LIKES AND DISLIKES, SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES.

LET ME SAY, HOWEVER, THAT ALTHOUGH THERE IS THE CONSIDERATION OF GIVING OUR YOUNGSTERS A COMPETITIVE EDGE IN THIS PREPARATION, WE MUST ALSO ENCOURAGE A SPIRIT OF UNDERSTANDING AND

COOPERATION, WHAT COULD BE TERMED AS "MODEL ADULT BEHAVIOR." THE GREATER REPRESENTATION OF STUDENTS OF VARIOUS CULTURES IN THE CLASSROOM FACILITATES SUCH COOPERATION BY THE SHARING OF INSIGHTS NEVER CONSIDERED BY OTHER STUDENTS AND TEACHERS AS WELL.

YOU KNOW, IT IS INFORMATIVE TO READ IN THE PAPER OR HEAR ON THE NEWS OR EVEN STUDY IN SCHOOL ABOUT THE STARVATION, TERRORISM, ATMOSPHERIC RISKS, AND WARS, BOTH MINOR AND MAJOR. YOUNG PEOPLE OF TODAY WILL BECOME THE LEADERS, VOTERS, CONSUMERS OF TOMORROW; AND WHEN THEY SEE FIRST-HAND THE CULTURAL INPUT AS WELL AS THE HUMAN CONDITIONS THAT ARE IMPACTED, WE MUST MAKE SURE THEY WILL BE MORE SENSITIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE IN THEIR THINKING. THEY MUST GAIN FRIENDS, GAIN TRUST, AND GAIN HOPE IN THE EXISTENCE OF A FUTURE. EVEN THOUGH A CULTURAL OR ETHNIC IDENTITY IS IMPORTANT, THEY MUST BE ENCOURAGED TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS.

THIRD AND FINAL TREND: THE MAJORITY OF THE 16 MILLION WORLDWIDE REFUGEES ARE SEEKING RESIDENCE IN THE UNITED STATES, BRINGING WITH THEM CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN.

SCHOOL SYSTEMS ARE ACUTELY FEELING THIS LAST TREND, AND I BELIEVE WE ARE OPENING OUR ARMS TO THEM AND STRIVING ON MANY LEVELS TO MEET THE CHALLENGE. I THINK THE PRESENCE OF THE NEW IMMIGRANT IN THE CLASSROOM IS ALSO VERY INSTRUCTIONAL FOR OUR AMERICAN-BORN CHILDREN OF ALL ETHNIC GROUPS. WE ALL KNOW HOW VERY OPEN AND TOLERANT CHILDREN CAN BE WHEN GIVEN THE CHANCE.

WE MUST BE PERSISTENT IN OUR EFFORTS TO KEEP OUR CHILDREN TOLERANT OF EACH OTHER. WE ARE, TO BE SURE, AWARE OF THE COMMUNICATION PROBLEM; MOST IMMIGRANT STUDENTS ARRIVE WITH LITTLE OR NO ENGLISH PROFICIENCY. MOREOVER, MANY LIVE IN POVERTY AND, DESPITE THEIR BELIEF THAT AMERICA IS THE PROMISED LAND, THEY ARE STILL QUIVERING FROM THE EFFECTS OF DISLOCATION FROM AND POSSIBLY VIOLENCE IN THEIR HOMELANDS. SUCH VULNERABILITY MUST BE RECOGNIZED AND HANDLED TENDERLY.

ON A MORE NATIONAL LEVEL, WE MUST DISCARD THE THINKING THAT AMERICA HAS HAD ENOUGH IMMIGRANTS TO HOLD US FOR AWHILE. WE CANNOT CONTINUE GIVING CREDENCE TO THE HUMOROUS BUT TRUE DEFINITION OF THE "DISADVANTAGED": "IF YOUR FOLKS GOT HERE TOO EARLY OR TOO LATE." THE TIME IS VERY RIPE; CONSIDER THAT THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION IS APPROACHING (1987-91) AND OUR NATION WILL BEGIN TO CELEBRATE THE TENETS ON WHICH IT WAS FOUNDED.

EVEN MORE TIMELY AND IRONIC IS THE MONUMENTAL FUNDRAISING EFFORT GOING ON TO GIVE THE STATUE OF LIBERTY A FACELIFT, SO TO SPEAK. (AND A SANCTUARY MOVEMENT GAINING MOMENTUM ACCENTUATES THE IRONY.) I'D LIKE TO DELVE A BIT MORE DEEPLY INTO THIS.

AS HISTORY BOOKS INFORMED US, THE STATUE OF LIBERTY WAS A GIFT FROM FRANCE, ARRIVING AT THE NEW YORK HARBOR IN 1885. SHE WAS BUILT ACROSS THE WATERS, WAS TRANSPORTED, AND NEEDED TO BE ASSEMBLED HERE. IN A VERY REAL WAY, SHE IS AN IMMIGRANT, A SYMBOL OF THE HOPE THAT AMERICA ADVERTISES SO WELL.

IN ONE HAND SHE HOLDS A BOOK (ACTUALLY CLUTCHES IT), AND THIS IS EXTREMELY SYMBOLIC FOR EDUCATORS. THIS SYMBOL IS THE BEST KEY TO ENSURE LIBERTY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY. TODAY'S INFORMATION AGE HAS PROVIDED AN ENVIRONMENT RICH WITH POTENTIAL. IT IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE "HAVES" TO KEEP INFORMATION FROM THE "HAVE-NOTS." EDUCATION FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS COMPETITIVE EDGE; OTHERWISE, OUR WORLD WILL CONTINUE TO REVOLVE AROUND THE UNFAIRNESS DOCTRINE: THE RICH WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE UNREPAYABLE LOANS TO THE POOR (H. CLEVELAND).

THEN THERE IS THE TORCH THE LADY HOLDS UP HIGH FOR ALL TO SEE. THE FLAME IS NOT TO CONSUME US; RATHER, IT IS TO SUSTAIN THE FIRES OF FAITH IN US ALL AND TO LIGHT THE WAY.

WE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION, PARTICULARLY IN URBAN AREAS, ARE ATTUNED TO WHAT I HAVE BEEN SAYING. THE MINORITIES, WHOSE FOLKS GOT HERE TOO LATE BUT EARLIER THAN THE NEW IMMIGRANTS, INCLUDE BLACKS AND HISPANICS FROM A FEW COUNTRIES. NOW ETHIOPIANS, HAITIANS, SUDANESE, SALVADORIANS, NICARAGUANS, KOREANS, VIETNAMESE, AND HUNDREDS OF IMMIGRANTS FROM NEARLY EVERY COUNTRY ON EARTH HAVE JOINED THE EARLIER ARRIVALS, AND THAT INCLUDES THE ETHNIC WHITES. WE STARTED OUT WITH THE BELIEF THAT "ALL ARE CREATED EQUAL," AND WE HAVE LEARNED THAT "ALL ARE CREATED DIFFERENT," TOO. THE CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND MUTUAL RESPECT GAINED FROM MULTILINGUAL, MULTICULTURAL AND GLOBAL INFUSIONS IN CURRICULA AND VARIOUS ACTIVITIES ARE HELPING US TO MORE SMOOTHLY HANDLE THIS TRANSFORMATION.

WHEN I POINTED OUT THESE REALITIES TO THE PUBLISHING HOUSES RECENTLY, I REQUESTED THAT THEY CONSIDER THESE CHANGES WHEN WRITING AND ILLUSTRATING TEXTBOOKS, DEVELOPING SOFTWARE AND SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS, AND DOING MARKETING RESEARCH. THEIR SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON THEIR ADAPTING JUST AS MUCH AS ANY SELLER OF GOODS. AS THEY INCORPORATE THESE REALITIES INTO THEIR THINKING, WE SHOULD SEE A WELCOME DIFFERENCE.

YOU KNOW, OUR SOCIETY HAS TOO OFTEN SHORT-CHANGED OUR YOUNGER PEOPLE; ADVERTISERS GEAR THEIR MESSAGES TO YOUNG PEOPLE IN A WAY THAT THE PHYSICAL PROMISE OF YOUTH IS UPLIFTED WHILE THE MENTAL CAPACITIES ARE IGNORED. EDUCATORS ARE OBLIGED TO REMEDY THIS SITUATION AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE BY TEACHING OUR CHARGES HOW TO WITHSTAND SUCH AN ATTACK. MATH, SOCIAL STUDIES, LANGUAGES, LIFE SKILLS COURSES, SKILLS TRAINING ALL CAN BENEFIT; IN FACT, I CANNOT THINK OF A COURSE THAT WOULD NOT BENEFIT FROM A DOSE OF MULTICULTURALISM. WE ARE OBLIGED TO PREPARE THEM TO BE LEADERS WHO ARE GLOBAL IN ORIENTATION. IF WE DO THIS WELL, THE DOUBTS AND FEARS OF ALL OF US WILL NOT DICTATE OUR ACTIONS, AS THEY HAVE IN THE PAST AND IN MANY WAYS STILL DO.

ALL OF OUR CHILDREN MUST RECOGNIZE THAT NO ONE PERSON OR GROUP HAS EVER HAD ALL THE ANSWERS. "TOO MANY COOKS **WILL NOT** SPOIL THE SOUP" **IF** WE DISCUSS THE INGREDIENTS; WE ALL HAVE TO EAT IT ANYWAY. TOGETHER WE WORLD CITIZENS CAN GENERATE THE ANSWERS, AND EDUCATION HELPS US GENERATE THE BEST ANSWERS.

SINCE I BEGAN WITH THE WORDS OF DR. KING, I'D LIKE TO CLOSE WITH SOME MORE OF HIS WISDOM:

> "I HAVE THE AUDACITY TO BELIEVE THAT PEOPLES EVERYWHERE CAN HAVE THREE MEALS A DAY FOR THEIR BODIES, EDUCATION AND CULTURE FOR THEIR MINDS, AND DIGNITY, EQUALITY, AND FREEDOM FOR THEIR SPIRITS. I BELIEVE THAT WHAT SELF-CENTERED MEN (WOMEN AND CHILDREN) HAVE TORN DOWN, OTHER-CENTERED MEN (WOMEN AND CHILDREN) CAN BUILD UP."

WE HERE TODAY MAY NOT BE ABLE TO PROVIDE THE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY TO THE 300 MILLION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN IN THE WORLD WHO DO NOT GO TO SCHOOL. WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO CHANGE THE FACT THAT 50 PERCENT OF ALL THE WORLD'S CHILDREN DON'T FINISH SECOND GRADE. BUT I AM PLEASED TO BE HERE TODAY AS WE TOGETHER SHARE OUR STRATEGIES TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT AMERICA DOES ITS PART TO ATTAIN DR. KING'S DREAM.